

SCOTLAND'S STORY

29

**The Darien fiasco:
Scotland's bid for
world power flops**

**After Anne, who?
A crisis question**

**Bank-backers put
money on the
funds of freedom**

**A traveller's tales
of our exotic Isles**

**When a cold, wet
summer meant
famine and death**



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ATLANTIC
OCEAN

1695

Bank of Scotland founded and
Company of Scotland established.



1698

Thousands perish as
Scotland is gripped
by famine.



1699

Scots colony at Darien
receives a second
contingent of settlers.



1700

Darien colony
surrenders to Spain.



1701

Death of Anne's only
surviving child forces
England to pass Act of
Settlement.



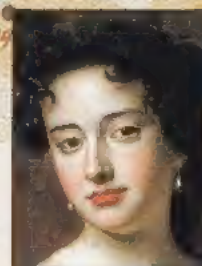
1703

Martin Martin's 'Description of
the Western Isles' published.



1702

Sudden death of William
brings Anne to the throne.



1704

Duke of Queensberry
brokers compromise
deal over Scotland's
constitution.



1706

Fletcher of Saltoun
vigorously opposes
parliamentary union
with England.



**In Part 30:
Crisis and Union**

PART OF
IRELAND

North
Channel

PART OF
ENGLAND



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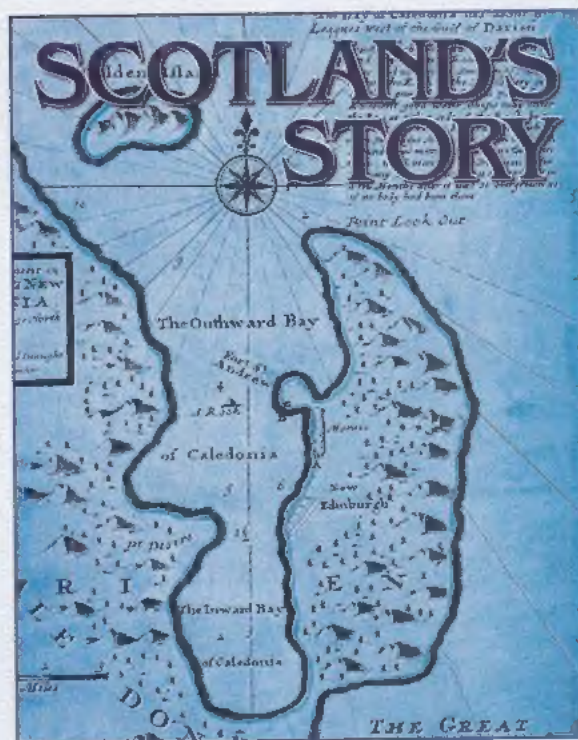
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COVER:
A late 17th century map of the Isthmus of Panama, where Scotland's colonial dreams became a nightmare.

A bold venture that cost dearly

William Paterson argued that the establishment of a colony at Darien on the Isthmus of Panama would prove itself to be the "door of the seas and the key of the universe".

As it turned out Paterson, the Dumfriesshire-born architect of the scheme, was not making a wholly overblown claim about the importance of Darien – as the 1914 Panama Canal later demonstrated.

But where Paterson was arguably experiencing delusions of grandeur, was in his belief that Scotland could launch itself successfully into the volatile colonial superleague of 1698.

To begin with, Spain had already claimed the area – indeed they had obtained a papal edict granting them "ownership".

The Spaniards were alive to the strategic importance of Darien, and they quickly became aggressive towards the Scots. But it was ultimately English hostility to Scottish success that wrecked the project.

Rightly perceiving Darien as a threat, the English East India Company put pressure on King William to oppose the Scots.

Attempts by the Company of

Scotland to raise capital in Amsterdam and Hamburg were also blocked. Under pressure in England, and fearful of offending Spain, William prevented the Scots from receiving any local assistance.

When the colony was forced into decline in 1699, William ordered that all requests for aid and supplies be refused. By the time the Darien colonists surrendered in April 1700, William had shown himself to be essentially an English king acting in England's interests.

The Williamite government's handling of the Darien affair was viewed in Scotland as a national insult – a feeling aptly demonstrated by the resulting fulminations of Scots pamphleteers.

The collapse of the Darien scheme was one of many issues that caused relations between Scotland and England to reach crisis point as the 18th Century dawned.

Most significant of all was the extent to which London began increasingly to interfere in Scottish constitutional politics – an intrusion that caused bitter resentment in Edinburgh.

The Bay of Caledonia
Leagues west of

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land very fo
holes and u
within the
Anchor gro
Excolet g
the Bay at
the East side
upon Diggin
a considerabl
them. Wood
tho many sco
a few Month
if no body h

Golden Island

The SCOTS Settlement in
AMERICA call'd NEW
CALEDONIA.
A.D. 1699. Lat. 8° 30 North.

According to an Original Draught
By H. Moll Geographer

The Outhward Bay

Fort St
Andrew

A Rock

of Caledonia

Morais

New
Edinburgh

Pt Desire

The Inward Bay

of Caledonia

English Miles

A sheltered anchorage in the isthmus of Darien gave the settlement of Caledonia an encouraging starting point...

(60)
 lies about 9
 f of Darien.
 d near Golden Is.
 Rocky full of deep
 Soundings, But
 the Bay is very good
 here is plenty of
 r, Ships may enter
 of the Rock but
 west. A Place where
 to make an Oven at B.
 of Gold was found in
 here Prodigiously for
 es wee cleared, yet in
 was so overgrown as
 here.

t
 GREAT

A voyage into the unknown

An audacious venture that aimed to give Scotland the key to shorter East-West trade routes, the Darien Scheme foundered on the rock of too-optimistic planning

The moral of the Darien venture can be summed up in one proverb: 'Don't put all your eggs in one basket'.

It was an attempt to solve Scotland's growing economic crisis at a stroke. Europe's colonial trade was booming, but Scots merchants were excluded from it, for she had no colonies of her own and countries that had them jealously guarded their monopoly rights.

If Scottish traders were to break out of stagnation and decline, they needed to break into the lucrative new markets, and the accepted way of doing this was a monopoly company, modelled on the great English and Dutch East India companies.

Many Edinburgh merchants were enthusiastic, but lack of capital and expertise – of general credibility – were likely to be a problem. Here the English (or some English) came to the rescue. The English East India Company's monopoly excluded not only foreigners from the eastern trade but many English merchants as

well – men who were not members of the company. As so often today, commercial interests were looking for an 'off-shore' base under a different jurisdiction to evade regulation at home.

Discontented would-be eastern traders in England found an 'over the border' rather than a literally off-shore haven. The result was an act of the Scottish parliament in 1695 founding the 'Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies'.

From the first, the venture was seen in Scotland in a patriotic light. But half the capital raised was to be English, and the company's affairs were managed from London – where, indeed, the whole idea of founding the company may have originated. Foreign money was being invested in an under-developed economy to produce, hopefully, a mutual profit.

The capital was raised easily, but things began to go badly wrong almost immediately. The English East India Company saw its monopoly being threatened, and flexed its



■ The heat, disease and other hazards of the Central American jungle proved too much for the inexperienced Scots colonists.



■ First volume of the Journal of Directors of the Company of Scotland.

there was a mission statement but no business plan. Nonetheless, three ships were ordered and advertisements published seeking 1,200 volunteers as colonists.

This indicated that the company was to seek to acquire a permanent base abroad. But where? No one, not even the ships' captains, knew. Secrecy made sense, in that as England was hostile to any Scots intercontinental venture, revealing the little fleet's destination would have given time for official objections and interference to be organised.

But it seems astonishing that volunteers could be found when they had no idea even of which continent they were to be taken to. Perhaps famine at home helped. Better leap into the dark than stay and starve. Life must be better elsewhere – anywhere.

The little fleet sailed from Leith in 1698, and once the ship's captains were well out in the Atlantic they opened their sealed orders. They were to sail to Darien, on the Panama Isthmus, and build a settlement there. The idea was the brainchild of William Paterson, Scots by birth but a successful London merchant. A man of energy and vision, he had been largely responsible for the founding of the Bank of England in 1694. Unlike other English directors of the Scottish Company, he had continued to support it, and indeed became its driving force. The confidence of Paterson in the Darien destination is indicated by the fact that he was prepared not just to risk his money but his and his family's future, for they sailed with the expedition.

Darien's vision for the Scots colony was awesome in its ambition – and folly. Darien was, potentially, of immense strategic importance, lying on the narrow land corridor connecting the vast sub-continents of North and South America. The richest of world trade routes took ships from Europe to the East Indies – modern Indonesia and surrounding mainland coasts of Asia.

But the hard facts of geography meant ships travelling east had to sail all the way round the Cape of Good Hope, taking a vast loop round Africa. Sailing west was even worse, for it meant braving the Straits of Magellan, skirting the Antarctic Circle and surviving storms and icebergs.

Paterson believed that by winning control of the Panama Isthmus for Scotland he could radically reshape trade patterns.

Goods sent too and from Europe would sail to Panama, be carried by land across the isthmus, and then

reshipped for the rest of their journey. Cumbersome – but saving thousands of miles of sailing and months of time. And, of course, such trade would be carried out by the Scottish Company's ships, passing goods through the new Scottish colony.

It was an extraordinary concept. But over-enthusiasm and the need for secrecy meant that vital questions about its practicality were ignored.

First, who owned and occupied the Panama Isthmus? Answer: Spain – still a major world power. The Spanish had held it for centuries, and were not going to be happy with the pipsqueak Scots trying to grab it. Making matters worse, Spain was at the centre of European political rivalries which were soon to lead to the War of the Spanish Succession. A childless old king was dying, rival powers supported rival candidates for the succession. For King William and 'British' interests, trying to make a favourable impression on the Spanish so they would support the British-backed candidate was a priority. Into this political minefield the Scots blundered by occupying Darien, evidently oblivious to the wider implications of what they were doing.

A second question had not been asked. Paterson was not the first to see the strategic significance of Panama (nor the last, as the 1914 Panama Canal demonstrates). So why had the Spanish not exploited the route? Indeed, why had so few Spanish colonists settled there? The answer lay in hostile terrain of mountains and marshes, combining with hot and wet climate to create an area ridden with diseases – like malaria and yellow fever – that quickly killed off most Europeans.

Paterson's expedition landed in November, 1698, and proudly founded 'Caledonia' and Fort St George. Native peoples proved quite friendly, but Spanish forces soon appeared and the Scots had to fight several skirmishes to defend their base. Meanwhile, King William had ordered English colonists in America and the West Indies not to help the Scots, as he tried to minimise diplomatic damage. The tiny colony was cut off and surrounded, and within months 150 of the 1,200 Scots were dead from disease. The colony was abandoned, and a terrible voyage home took 150 more lives.

Paterson survived, but lost his wife and son. A second contingent of settlers had already sailed, arriving at the abandoned settlement

► strong political muscle. The House of Lords protested. The House of Commons threatened to impeach the company's English directors. King William, having ratified the Scots parliament's act for the company, now faced an English backlash – an example of the possible perils of devolution, with two parliaments within a state pursuing incompatible ends. Most of the English merchants involved, fearing prosecution, withdrew their capital from the company.

Inevitably, there was patriotic fury

in Scotland, and a resolve to show that the country did not need English help to break into intercontinental trade. She would go it alone. So the starting capital of £400,000 sterling was raised – perhaps half the entire capital the nation had available for investment at the time.

So far so good. But in deciding to invest, many had been ruled by hot hearts instead of cool heads. While the basic intentions of the Scottish Company were clear, no-one knew what, in terms of specific action, it was going to do. In modern jargon,

Dear Brother Caledonia
December 22, 1698

I shall here in your private journal give you a short account of our voyage & then
shortly of my self. Here you are not to expect any more of a Journal
and a great deal of the ship's business, because I did not learn navigation, which
was not a charge for my fault, for there was no publick teacher here a better
one of the ship of a. I learned a little, but soon gave it over again
for a reason, as you found, the Latin prayers which in the parish church
were for want of books and instruments, with which I could not
be supplied here. Still such things as I noticed I have put you are aware
first you were sailed from Kilmorie day upon Sunday ye 27 day of July 1698, about
about ten o'clock at night being five ships in company. Two were weighed
anchor, we were forced to fly by that night, waiting for our brother & penance
which were carried ashore with our supernumerary men, & had no quarters
any more as afterwards we understood at their return next morning
20th the wind blew hard, which made us carry but little sail
21st the weather proved so calm, that our project did not move
22nd this morning we had passed by Obbinton, the wind changed at 5, and blew
gently until 6, at which time we were straight over against
Dunnet head, where we were visited with a gale by 5th wind, which, but our
Commander did not notice till afternoon was calm again.
23rd the wind changed contrary to the 5th & a gentle breeze, before noon we
saw the first sight of land, afternoon calm.
24th the wind blew gently till noon at 3, 3rd, when we had a very foggy mist
25th the fog continued, which made us spare sail, lest we should run in upon some
Island or shoals.
26th the fog continued such as thick as ever, which made our fleet lose one another
notwithstanding of several guns fired by us, we secured our course
27th at night we designed to spare sail, until we should hear of our
company ships, but as we thus intended to our grief we saw land
we partly set sail, to pass ye point, & as we passed by we saw more land
one on each side of us at less distance, in a league or less, surprised us very
much. But by ye providence of God the wind blew strong, so we were
able again to set a course next morning.
28th This morning cleared up some what, we secured in ye bottom of the bay
29th the wind changed contrary to us, by which we found ourselves in the north
30th the wind continuing we designed to sail for Orkney to get notice of our
company ships, but at noon the wind changed at 11, and we made
us change our resolutions.
31st the sea was very rough, & the wind but small
1st day we saw land, some, called one another, (at night, you the 1st day
one in short we knew not what it was we found the 2nd day March
2nd the wind was at 11, & no steering w. in ye morning we saw a sail
which made us spare sail, hoping it was some of our company, &
about ten o'clock she came up with us and proved to be the
Endeavour, they could give us no account where ye other ships were,
for they had separated from us in the fog, as we had done. At
night was very stormy and the wind blew hard.

■ An 'arrival' letter to his brother from Colin Campbell who sailed to Darien on the Caledonia in July, 1698.

in November, 1699, but it too had to accept harsh reality, and surrendered to the Spanish a few months later.

When things go wrong, Scots like to blame the English. And in this case English hostility was indeed a factor in a Scottish failure. But it had been known from the start that a Scots attempt to break the English East India Company monopoly would meet English opposition. That William would put England's interests before Scotland was also predictable. But above all, the blame should have been assigned to the planners of a venture who gave little realistic thought to its implications.

The Darien Venture turned within

a few months into the Darien Disaster. There was an outcry of popular fury, at English and royal betrayal. But, whoever was to blame, the grim consequences were inescapable. Lives lost. A huge chunk of the country's investment capital down the drain. Scotland more impoverished than ever. National political confidence lost and confidence in the political system of dual monarchy further undermined. A king acted inevitably in the interests of his richest and most powerful kingdom when interests differed.

Put this way, Darien seems, paradoxically, to lead towards the sort of union with England that came in 1707. Failure might have

aroused anti-English feeling, but it also suggested that co-operation with England might provide a more fruitful path to a better future than futile assertions of political rights. And there was one powerful interest group in Scotland which was to have a direct interest in supporting a new union in the years ahead – those who invested in the Darien Venture.

They were promised compensation from England for lost investments if the union was accepted.

Thus, ironically, those who had invested in Darien out of Scottish patriotic zeal found that the only way to get their money back was to abolish the Scottish parliament. ●

TIMELINE

1694

Scotsman William Paterson founds the Bank of England.

1695

Bank of Scotland is founded and the 'Company of Scotland' is established.

1696

Authorities report on 'great calamity' of harvest failures. Two years later the nation is again gripped by famine.

1698

First 'Darien' fleet sails from Leith. Martin Martin's 'A Late Voyage to St Kilda' is published.

1699

Second Scots contingent sails to Darien. The colonists suffer from English hostility, Spanish colonial aggression, and disease.

1700

Failure of the colony at Darien. Death of Anne's last surviving child provokes crisis in the Protestant succession.

1701

The English Act of Settlement safeguards the Protestant succession south of the Border, but it provokes outrage in Scotland.

1702

William II and III is killed as he is thrown from his horse.

1703

Scots parliament acts to secure its constitutional position; Martin's 'Description of the Western Isles' is published.

1704

Act Anent Peace and War is passed by Scottish parliament. England forced to ratify the Scots Act of Security.

THE REMAINS OF A NATION'S HOPE



■ Excavation of the old Scots settlers' gunpowder store – the only building of stone and brick found by the archaeologists – at what was Fort St Andrew.

When Scots quit their doomed Darien colony in Panama, the dream of real international power died. But what, apart from that, did they leave behind?

One of anniversaries that seems to not have been widely celebrated is the 300th year since the abandonment of the ill-fated Darien colony. On April 12, 1700, the Scots, who had signed an agreement with the Spanish, left forever their dream of a mercantile future which they believed lay in a trading colony on the Atlantic coast of Panama.

Arguably, the capitulation ended any hopes of maintaining an independent Scotland – confirmed a few years later by the Act of Union, passed partly because of the promise of reimbursement of the Darien share-holders by the English Government.

In 1979, this writer was able to

undertake an archaeological survey of what remains of the colony in Darien and to uncover the quite extensive remains of what was a very shortlived occupation of the site.

Located around a deep bay, known as the Puerto Escoces, can be found traces of the fort they constructed, known as Fort St Andrew; their settlement, New Edinburgh; the remains of at least one Scottish ship, the Olive Branch, that sank in the harbour; as well as various forts and batteries constructed by the Spanish during their two month siege.

Nowadays the harbour is empty, but for a small seasonal Cuna Indian village. The shores are covered in forest, much as they were when the Scots pioneers arrived in 1698.

The seeds of the failure of the colony lay as much in the climate of Panama as in the mercantile and imperial politics of the time.

When the archaeological team arrived at the entrance to the harbour in December, 1978 – very much the same time of year as the first fleet landed – the sky and sea merged into a single greyness, with an oppressive humidity and tropical heat.

For the first weeks it rained every day, and this was the beginning of the dry season. Between April and November, there can be up to five metres of rain and nothing ever dries.

But the greatest menace is not the water but insects – mosquitoes and sand-flies airborne in such density that even the local Indians



■ Poignant reminders of the Scottish presence in Panama 300 years ago: a selection of left-behind artefacts including pottery, nails and clay pipes.

move out to the islands to avoid them. They carry the diseases which hit the settlers so badly that, in the first six months, there were only 700 left of the 1300 who arrived.

Into this hell sailed the hopes of Scotland's future. The driving force behind the colony was William Paterson (who earlier had been one of the founders of the Bank of England), an idealist and promoter of free trade, who may well have visited Darien in his youth. Paterson was also influenced by a traveller, Lionel Wafer, who had recently returned from Darien, having spent a year living with the Indians.

Paterson believed that a route could be cut across the isthmus, and that the lucrative Indies trade could avoid the Cape and travel eastwards through this Scottish entrepôt.

A trading company was set up in 1695 and its capital was raised through shares that were rapidly taken up in a fervour of nationalist mania.

There were two expeditions to Darien: the first with Paterson (and his wife, who soon died of fever) on board, landed in November, 1698, but by July the following year, abandoned the colony, and fled to



■ A view from above of the location where Fort St Andrew was established.

Jamaica, with one ship only managing to get back to Scotland. Before news of the colony's abandonment reached Scotland, a second expedition had already sailed with a further 1500 eager colonists. They arrived in November, 1699, only to find the burned-out remains of the huts and the wreck of the *Olive Branch*, one of the resupply ships, lying in the harbour.

They complained to Scotland that

they had come, not to found a colony, but to reinforce one, but nevertheless set about rebuilding the settlement, completing the fort and constructing storehouses.

The most obvious remains of the colony seem to date from this second expedition. The new colonists abandoned 'New Edinburgh' which had been in any case located next to a mangrove swamp, and chose

instead to fortify a small peninsula that jutted out into the harbour.

They cut a channel, about 10 feet wide, at sea level through the coral bedrock and across the peninsula, and on one side built a rampart and four large bastions of earth and coral. These survive, although much eroded, and still visible are the emplacements for the cannon that they mounted there.

Inside, they placed their huts which numbered, according to records, 72 for planters, 15 for officers and two storehouses. Excavations revealed a number of post holes from these buildings. Most telling evidence of the Scottish occupation were the many artefacts that covered the surface.

They seem to have filled the storehouses and included pottery, glass beads, glass, including many brandy bottles, but especially clay pipes.

These are particularly poignant reminders of the Scottish presence, as many of the pipes were stamped with the maker's mark, and these same makers can be found in the records of the Company (now in the National Library) as the suppliers of the colony. The glass beads seem to have



■ Where the mosquito flies: inhospitable natural environment that defeated the Scots – with Spanish help. Below: rock-cut channel linking to the Fort.

► been intended for trade with the natives and are also mentioned in the Company's accounts.

The only stone building that they constructed was a circular store for gunpowder. It was made of local stone and brick (which was brought from Scotland as ballast). When they were quarrying the stone, there was great excitement, as veins of gold were found in the rock. It proved to be only 'fool's gold', however – iron pyrites.

There are also several wrecks in the harbour, but we investigated only the Olive Branch, which burnt out and sank at her mooring in July, 1699, when a candle was knocked over and caught alight to a barrel of brandy. Artefacts on board included the same clay pipes as were found inside the colony itself.

The Spanish were very sensitive to the Scottish incursion into their territory. While the Scots thought the land uninhabited, this was in fact very close to the site of the first Spanish mainland colony in the New World, a town called Acla founded in 1515.

The Spanish had indeed cut a

route to the Pacific Ocean and over which they carried four ships in sections, to be rebuilt and launched as the first European ships to sail on the Pacific, while by the 17th century the isthmus was crossed by the mule trains carrying the silver of South America.

Puerto Escoces was naturally a very sensitive area, and the Spanish – believing the Scots to be much stronger than they were – sent a large army to dislodge them in early 1700. A drawn-out siege followed, and the remains of batteries and forts from this campaign are still visible as earthworks in the jungle.

But with the rains threatening, the Spanish allowed generous terms for the Scots to leave – which were accepted – and the Scots finally left in mid-April, 1700. They were so weak that the Spanish navy helped to warp their ships out of the harbour. None returned to Scotland, and most of the survivors lost their lives in a hurricane off South Carolina in August, 1700. ●



Calamity of 'the seven ill years'

We may think of famine as something that happens to others. But in Scotland of the 1690s the seed corn was eaten and harvests so poor that the resulting starvation was seen as God's punishment

Famine Yes, we know about it. We see the terrible pictures on television, the anguish and the suffering. But we are distanced from it. Famine is something that happens to other people.

It happens to people in very different cultures from our own, in distant parts of the world. It is something alien and we view it from the outside, appalled.

Yet, looked at in the long term, starvation is as much a part of European experience as African or Asian – though Scotland has been spared it in the last two centuries (a mere moment in the long march of time).

In our agriculture-based economy of the past, famine was something a person could expect to experience in his or her life – and it might end that life. It might skip a generation or two, pounce for a single year at random, or remain on the prowl for several years in succession, cutting down the population.

War might disrupt food production and bring famine. In the long term, human damage to the environment might cause production to slump. But basically, famine or feast was a matter of the weather each year – and the weather was the work of God.

In many years much of the population would expect to go hungry in spring. People lived mainly on grain, and grain stored from the previous year's harvest needed to be carefully rationed until the new growing season was well under way.

A wet and cool summer, simply a minor annoyance to most of us – as we do not make our living from the land – would mean a poor and late harvest. Summer drought could be equally worrying.

Cautious farming folk would begin to ration their food early if such ominous weather patterns appeared – and for those who bought grain, prices would begin to rise.

Weather-watching was an

obsession. It wasn't just telling you whether to put up your umbrella, but whether you would live or starve.

On the whole in the 17th century, Scotland did not do too badly in the weather lottery. But the later 1690s were very different, and memory of them was to be long lasting – not necessarily, it has been pointed out, because they saw the worst nationwide famine in Scottish history, but because they saw the last one.

In myth the famine became 'the seven ill years' – not because there were seven of them, but because events were being compared with the great famine in Egypt described in the Bible. Or they were 'King William's black years', suggesting they were God's punishment on the king for having accepted William as king after he had usurped his father-in-law's throne.

The decade began encouragingly. As late as the summer of 1695, grain exports were being encouraged. But the following five years saw three disastrous harvests and two

that were barely adequate.

In these two years of intermission it was not the weather that was the problem. The growing seasons were good, but the previous year's harvest had been so bad that farmers had been forced to start eating their seed corn so that they and their families could survive.

With less seed preserved to plant for a new crop, there was no hope of a good harvest, whatever the weather.

The 1695 harvest was so bad that by June, 1696, the authorities were talking of the great 'calamity of the country'. Taxes on grain imports were removed – and a few months later a temporary subsidy was introduced to encourage the import of foodstuffs, because it had become clear by then that the 1696 harvest was also going to be bad.

It was, but some relief came when 1697 saw a good growing season. However, because some seed corn had been eaten instead of planted the size of the crop was limited, and though prices fell from crisis levels ▶



■ Bleak outlook: people fled the worst-hit areas but thousands died of hunger.



► they remained high. And it proved too soon to relax.

The 1695 and 1696 harvests had been bad, but that of 1698 was much worse. When crops had been planted, seed was short and the weather terrible. The summer saw drought, meaning the harvest would be late. Autumn brought gales and rain, alternating with frost and snow.

Much of the harvest was not worth collecting at all, some corn having been cut by reapers working in the snow at the start of 1699. The 1699 harvest brought relief, but its volume was down since less seed had been sown. But the ill years were at last

over. Thanks were given to God for withdrawing his wrath from the land.

Many were not there to celebrate. They had simply wasted away and died. You could see death in the faces of the poor everywhere, said one contemporary, describing their ghostly looks, feebleness, and the illnesses that threatened sudden death to their weakened bodies.

Corpses lay by the sides of roads, where folk desperately seeking food had collapsed. Babies died because their mothers were starving and could no longer produce milk.

Women wept in market places when there was no food to buy and

When the ill years were over, many were not there to celebrate. They had simply wasted away and died

their children at home had not eaten for days.

The poorest of the poor, the many thousands who often went hungry even in good times, died first. Poor farmers normally totally reliant on their own crops for food and with no money to buy supplies, were also quickly affected.

In towns where ordinary folk relied on buying food, soaring prices

meant they soon could afford no more.

Even the well-off suffered—in more isolated areas they might have money to buy food but, finding that none was available at any price, had to flee their homes. People poured out of the worst-hit areas, eating anything they could find, often ending up scavenging on beaches.

Thousands fled to Ulster, hoping



■ In the shadow of Stirling Castle, the barren fields tell their own story as hungry people walk away from land that once sustained them.

widespread starvation it had come as a shock – and perhaps brought the dawning of a feeling that famine should be fought, not just accepted as an act of God. In the prevailing fatalism there is a tinge of feeling that human resources should be – or should have been – more actively employed to limit suffering.

The government – the Scottish Privy Council – intervened more than in the past, though still only in a limited way, juggling with taxes and subsidies. Fletcher of Saltoun denounced the selfishness of the rich, those who could have helped but did not. Many of the selfish rich would probably have said helping the poor was not their problem, but a matter for the church. But though church funds might help a trickle of poor in good years, they were totally incapable of dealing with the vast floods of them in the late 1690s.

Moreover, for church-based poor relief, the famine came at a bad time. Presbyterianism had been restored in 1690, but the hatreds aroused by conflict over types of church government remained deep and disruptive. In many parishes where presbyterian ministers had been appointed, landlords inclined to episcopalianism had withdrawn from attending services – and thus from contributing to collections for the poor. And if you hated William and took famine to be God's punishment on the land, who were you to interfere in His judgment?

Why did Scotland escape great famines after 1700? Good luck. There were to be bad years in the generations ahead, when many worried about starvation, but not repeated seasons of disastrous

weather. And gradually the country grew richer, agricultural methods improved and the introduction of the humble potato meant there was an alternative crop which often survived weather patterns which ruined grain harvests.

Now, we eat so much imported food that a long summer of sun and high temperatures and no rain would be hailed as a wonderful season and produce an encouraging crop of tourists. Three hundred years ago it would have meant start eating less, prepare to be hungry, and pray that the merciful aspect of God would show itself in the months to come. ●

to find better conditions there.

We are now back to the pictures we are used to on television – masses of desperate people, gaunt faces, prominent bones, eyes of despair.

Just as with reports from under-developed countries today, numbers of those suffering or dying are so great that no one really knows the true size of the crisis. And in a sense it does not matter to the viewing audience. You can't react differently to rival estimates of 100,000 or 200,000. All you can do is take in a sense of immense suffering.

Modern research indicates that the death toll in Scotland in the late

1690s was not as high as some traditional tales have suggested.

In parishes that can be studied in detail, population fell between 56 per cent and 15 per cent over the five years of crisis, but not all of the decrease was due to starvation – many had emigrated, and fewer babies had been born. Nonetheless, on the 15 per cent estimate, Scotland's population would have fallen by about 150,000 during the crisis.

In remote parishes of the north and west the figures may have been much higher. Estimates that the nation's population had fallen by a third, or even a half, are exaggerated, but for some of

the worst-hit districts such figures may be accurate. And though you might survive, the suffering of these years would remain a terrible memory.

The catastrophe of 1695-1700 was not Scotland's worst nationwide famine, but it was the last – and the best-recorded. Records may still be fragmentary, but some areas of the jigsaw of suffering can be assembled, whereas famines in previous centuries often are known by little more than terse notices that harvests were bad and a great many of the poor died.

In the late 1690s, too, there are not just records of famine but comments on it. After several decades without

Scotland invests in



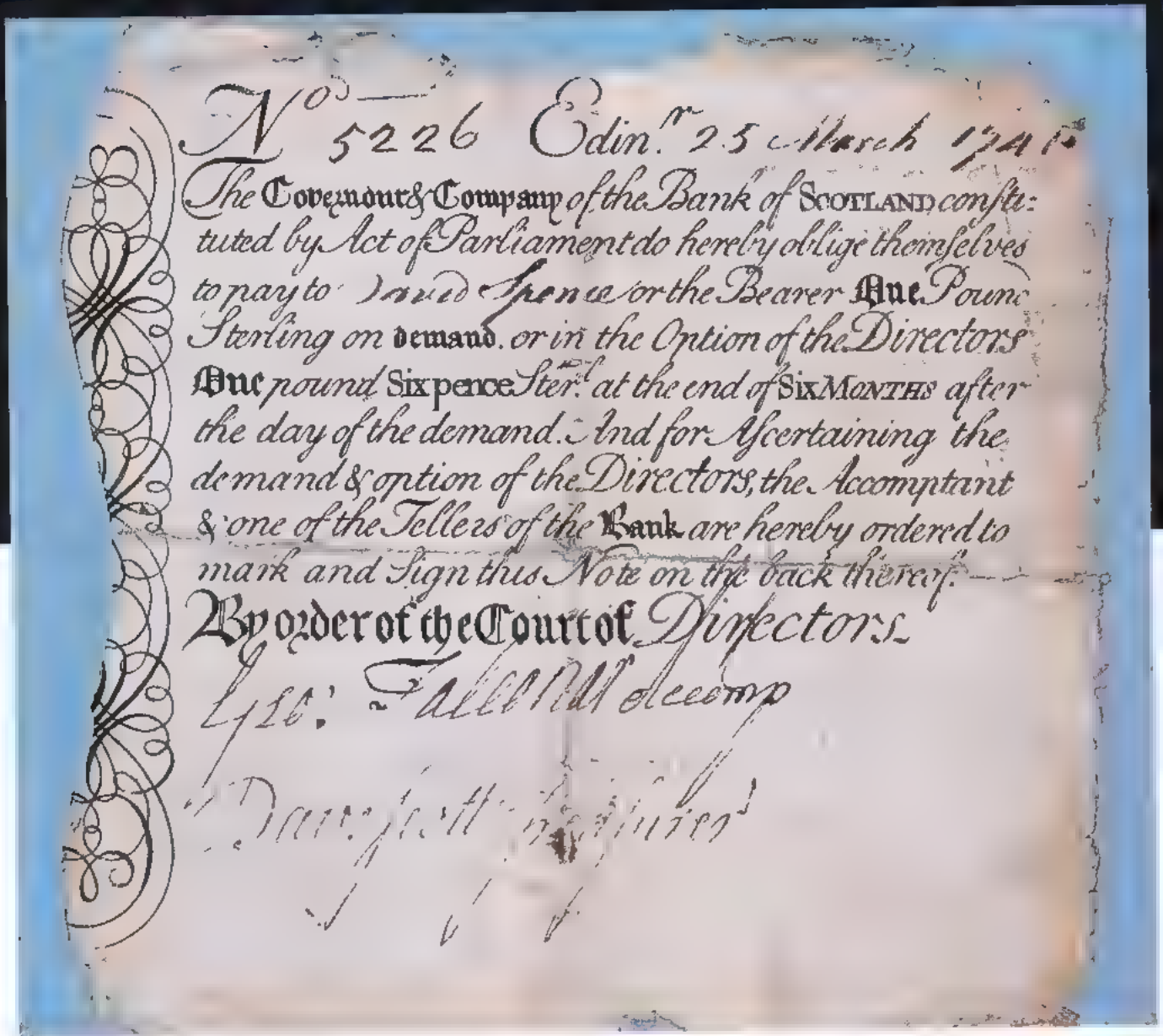
With its weak economy, the country was crying out for a banking system with its own credibility. It stepped the adventurers

Carefully preserved in the National Archives in Edinburgh is an original Act of the Parliament of Scotland bearing the date July 17 1695. Handwritten on paper rather than parchment, there is little in the document's appearance to betray the significance of its content. But this Act of Parliament marks a turning point in the economic development of Scotland. It sets out the terms and conditions under which the country's first bank was to be established—the name of which, naturally enough, was to be 'Bank of Scotland'.

A milestone had been reached with this piece of legislation, and the hopes and ambitions of so many Scots depended on its success. Landowners were looking for long-term credit at reasonable rates, while merchants needed long-term security and the collective strength which would come from pooling their resources and limiting their liability.

Before the passing of this Act, banking facilities in Scotland barely existed. True, money could be borrowed from some of the private goldsmiths in Edinburgh, but Scottish coin was in short supply and foreign coins circulated freely. The country was sparsely populated and economically backward, with one of the most unreliable currencies in Europe. Scottish merchants traded largely with England and the Low Countries, exporting the staples of wool, grain, fish and linen. In return they imported such luxuries as wine, brandy, fine cloths and lace. But

financial freedom



■ A Bank of Scotland £1 note of 1741 – complete with option clause. Later there was a move to prevent Scottish banks issuing £1 notes.

these had to be paid for in cash, or by bills of exchange drawn on London. The Scots were severely hampered by a shortage of the former, and, due to their status in London as 'aliens', received less favourable rates for the latter. Under such conditions, Scotland's economy had little chance to expand.

What the country desperately needed was a stable economy, founded in a banking system which would offer long-term credit and security. Small wonder then that Scotland's political and mercantile elite supported the creation of Bank of Scotland.

The passing of the Act 'for the

Carrying on and Managing of a Publick Bank' was supported by 172 adventurers (shareholders) both in Edinburgh and in London, chief among whom was the Lord High Chancellor of Scotland. The Act authorised the raising of a nominal capital of £100,000 sterling (£1,200,000 Scots) and additionally granted three specific and unique privileges.

The first of these was limited liability which meant that, in the event of the failure of the Bank, the adventurers would lose only their subscription stake. Limited liability was not generally extended to other businesses until the middle of the 19th century, with the passing of the

Companies Acts. Secondly, the new company was granted a 21-year monopoly on banking in Scotland. And finally (and most bizarrely) it conferred the right of all foreign shareholders to claim Scots nationality, a right which persisted up until 1920!

It is a curious irony that while the Bank of England was founded in 1694 by a Scotsman, William Paterson – also of the Darien Company – it was an Englishman, John Holland, who was largely associated with Bank of Scotland.

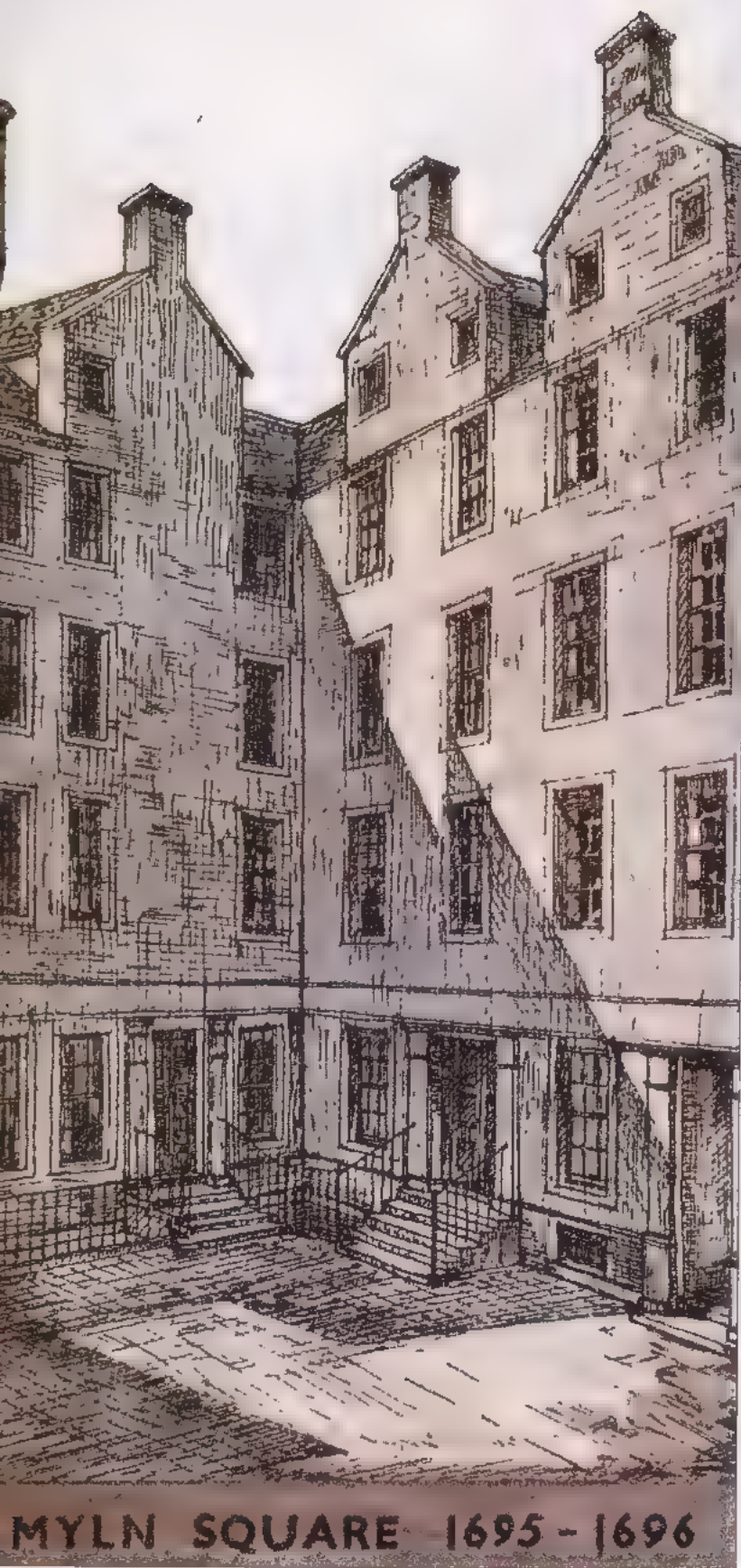
Holland, a merchant of some standing in the city of London, was brought North to serve as the first Governor of the bank – which

opened its doors for business in April, 1696.

The intervening nine months had been spent securing premises and staff, electing directors and, most crucially, raising the working capital required. This was no small undertaking at the end of the 17th century with such limited means of advertising the whole enterprise.

Subscription books were opened in both Edinburgh and London, the Edinburgh one lying open for two months in the Cross Keys Tavern just off the High Street. Not a bad ploy when you consider the influence strong drink sometimes has on the spending of money! At any rate the full nominal capital was raised, with

■ The modest first Edinburgh base of what is now one of Europe's fastest-growing banks.



■ Early hi-tech: staff at Glasgow's Ingram Street branch proudly display their typewriters and adding machines in the 1920s.

a first call on adventurers for 10 per cent

From the beginning, the bank lent money, discounted bills and provided for the transmission of cash to other places, most notably London and Rotterdam. It was one of the first banks in Europe to successfully issue paper currency, redeemable for cash on demand.

Bank notes from £5 to £100 were produced in the early years, with the first £1 note following in 1704. Unlike the English who regarded paper money with suspicion, the Scots welcomed it, since coin was in short supply north of the Border.

Initially business was good and the bank expanded, setting up branches in Glasgow, Aberdeen, Dundee and Montrose. But the economic strains caused by political uncertainty and the subsequent collapse of the ill-fated Darien Scheme forced it to retrench. Activities were focused on Edinburgh again, with a second and equally unsuccessful attempt at a branch network in the 1730s.

The Bank's monopoly lapsed in

1716, and in 1727, the Royal Bank of Scotland was set up – marking the beginning of what is now the thriving and active Scottish financial services industry.

Despite its reputation in some quarters as the 'Jacobite bank', the historical records of Bank of Scotland reveal a different story.

News of the arrival at Moidart of Prince Charles Edward Stuart in August, 1745, prompted decisive action: some 50 per cent of the banknotes issued were gathered in and destroyed ahead of the Highlanders, thereby depriving them of any financial support.

The minute books further record on September 13 that "the Highland men and others that were at Perth are marching towards this country and that they are on this side of the River Forth and marching towards Edinburgh".

The directors moved quickly and closed up the bank, transferring all the cash, securities and papers to the Castle for safekeeping.

And there they remained



throughout the Jacobite occupation of the city.

As the Scottish economy grew in the mid 18th century, new banks were set up, especially in Glasgow. The growing trade with Virginia and the West Indies prompted merchants to form partnerships, such as the Ship and the Thistle Banks. By 1772 there were 31 banks in Scotland, each issuing its own banknotes.

It was in this climate of expansion that Bank of Scotland finally established its branch network, beginning with Dumfries and Kelso in 1774.

The increasing industrialisation of the 19th century saw banks financing major projects such as roads, railways and canals. Again their numbers rose, with the old public banks facing stiff competition from the big joint stock banks that were springing up.

But not all were as prudent as they might have been and reckless lending policies led to some major crashes. Confidence was shaken with the collapse in 1857 of the Western Bank, and then again with the

disastrous failure in 1878 of the City of Glasgow Bank. This latter led to the ruin of some 1,500 of its shareholders since, unlike Bank of Scotland, it didn't have the benefit of limited liability.

The Scottish banking system took a pounding with these collapses and it was down to the older established banks to restore confidence and stability.

One long-term result of the episode was that the financial focus of the country was shifted very firmly back to Edinburgh and the more conservative practices of the banks there.

The 19th century also witnessed an attempt by the Westminster Parliament to prevent Scottish banks issuing banknotes for less than £5. In effect, it wanted to outlaw the £1 note, reserving the right of issue to the Bank of England.

The proposed legislation sparked outrage in Scotland and the immediate launch of a campaign opposed to it.

Writing under the pseudonym

'Malachi Malagrowther', Sir Walter Scott published a series of letters in the Edinburgh Weekly Journal which were instrumental in the campaign.

The government finally relented and the Scottish banks were allowed to retain their £1 notes. To this day, Scott's portrait appears on Bank of Scotland notes.

And so to the 20th century, and the laying of the foundations of the modern banking systems we have today. The world wide depression of the inter war years led to stagnation in the financial sector and little or no innovation.

However, the post-war recovery of the 1950s brought with it a demand for sophisticated financial backing and funding on a much larger scale.

This then sparked a period of consolidation and amalgamation as banking companies merged in order to survive. The small banks simply couldn't hope to compete in this new environment.

Coupled with this was a radical expansion in the services and

products on offer. Personal loans were created in 1958, the first drive-in branch was opened in 1964, and mobile banks were introduced into remote rural areas.

But it was the advances in information technology which transformed the delivery of these products and revolutionised the face of modern banking.

The advent of telephones, typewriters and adding machines had all made an impact in their turn, but these were nothing compared to the computer. Back in 1959 Bank of Scotland became the first British bank to introduce computerised accounting.

Since then, the IT revolution has gained momentum and there is no sign of it slowing down. The Bank's market is now global and served by cash dispensers, debit and credit cards, home banking, telephone banking, electronic cash transfers, internet banking, and WAP phones.

It's all a far cry from the early days of discounting bills in a small rented office in Myln Square. ●

Fertile but tragic: Queen Anne with William, her only surviving child – out of 14 – who died at the age of 11.

WHO RULE

The issue could not be ignored, but London did its best to do so

William of Orange was king because he was a Protestant, whereas his dethroned father

in law James had been a Catholic. The essential attribute for a British monarch, it had been decided, was Protestantism. But as a substitute king he had one disadvantage: he was childless, and one of the prime duties of any hereditary ruler was to provide an heir – a son, though if he couldn't do any better, a girl would do.

Who William's immediate successor should be was agreed among those who put the religion of their sovereign above all else: Anne, King James's daughter, was satisfactorily Protestant. But though her fertility was abundant, in stark contrast to William's sterility, the health record of her children was appalling. Fourteen of her pregnancies resulted in stillbirths or babies who died in infancy – with a single exception: Prince William survived through the 1690s, and in 1700 was named the ultimate Protestant successor. Then, in 1702, he died at the age of 11.

Urgent action was needed to provide for the succession after Anne – and how vital it was to reach agreement on succession in advance was highlighted by the Spanish situation. The great War of the Spanish Succession was just beginning, with the great states of Europe lining up in support of rival candidates.

The successor to Anne had to be, first, Protestant, secondly, had to have Stuart royal blood. Much scrabbling through the branches of European royal family trees had concluded that the Hanoverian dynasty had the best claim. Better a German king than a Catholic one.

The English parliament acted promptly, and by the 1701 Act of

FOLLOWS ANNE TO 'AWKWARD' SCOTS?

Settlement ruled that the thrones should be inherited on Anne's death by the Electress or, if she had died, the Elector of Hanover. The wisdom of settling the matter was promptly proved, when in 1702 the sudden death of King William following a fall from his horse brought Anne to the throne.

But the English Act of Settlement could only settle the thrones of England and Ireland. What about Scotland? It was assumed by politicians that the union of the crowns between the two kingdoms would be continued; that Scotland would accept the settlement England had agreed.

As the English parliament had no jurisdiction over Scotland it could be said that in ignoring the Scottish issue the English were acting in a way that was constitutionally correct even sensitive, in not being so impertinent as to suggest what they wanted the Scots to do.

But the assumption that Scotland would follow England's lead, even if unstated, was interpreted as insulting. England was seen as treating Scotland not as an equal partner in the union of the crowns, which is what she aspired to be, but as an appendage of England with no choice but to accept England's lead.

Scotland was already smarting under wrongs, real and perceived, blamed on the English – over the failure of the attempt to establish a colony at Darien, over trade restrictions, over being dragged into the War of the Spanish Succession in support of English ambitions, over bad and anglo-centric government.

The Act of Settlement was a further humiliating blow to national pride.

For Queen Anne as for King William, Scotland was of little interest. Its crown was a rather awkward responsibility which came with the English crown, though, as with Ireland, retaining control of the country was necessary for strategic reasons. But Scotland's separate government from England made it a nuisance and quarrels were inevitable.

William believed a new and closer

union would be the best solution and Anne's ministers took up the idea of a new union that would involve Scots acceptance of the Hanoverian succession.

In 1702 the Scottish parliament accepted the appointment of commissioners to negotiate such a union – not out of enthusiasm, but because most of the members who would have opposed the idea had withdrawn from parliament in a temporary huff over constitutional issues. Anne's representatives were delighted to take advantage of this tactical blunder to launch their new union scheme. But the negotiations came to nothing – the English were not sufficiently interested in Scotland's problems to give priority to the matter, and though terms were agreed on most essentials, Scots demands for recognition of the rights of the failed Darien Company were resisted by the English and talks were abandoned.

As a result, the 1703 session of the Scottish parliament was a disaster for the government. The issue of Scotland's constitutional position was raised, and members realised that though the English assumption that Scotland would accept the English Act of Settlement might be insulting, the act gave Scotland a chance to fight back against humiliation.

The idea was: instead of tamely accepting the Hanoverian line of monarchs, raise the succession issue and discuss it in wide terms, indicating that Scotland might well look elsewhere for a king.

From political confusion and passionate assertions of Scotland's rights emerged the Act of Security. On Anne's death Scotland would adopt a different successor to her throne than England had, unless a constitutional settlement was reached that would restore 'the honour and sovereignty of this Crown and Kingdom', and guarantee frequent meetings and the power of the Scottish parliament, and the freedom of Scottish religion, liberty and trade from English interference. Scotland would then achieve her dream of again being an



George I was the first Hanoverian to rule Britain.



■ The Duke of Queensberry: used favours and bribes to buy off opponents of parliamentary union.

► independent state – which just happened to have the same monarch as England. To emphasise Scotland's determination to fight for her rights if necessary, the act ended with orders to the towns and Protestant landlords to arm themselves and train their men to fight. From the government's point of view, parliament was out of control.

The Duke of Queensberry, representing Queen Anne, sought at first to buy off his opponents with concessions. He offered the 'Wine Act' which authorised the import of wine and other liquors from all foreign countries, thus allowing the reopening of trade with France even though Britain was at war with her. Many Scots regarded the European war as an English war into which

they had been unjustly dragged and which was damaging to Scotland's interests – not least by preventing trade with France – and the act was intended to show official willingness to deal with such grievances.

Parliament, however, still insisted on the Act of Security – and for good measure passed the 'Act anent (concerning) Peace and War' declared that no monarch after Queen Anne should be able to declare war on Scotland's behalf without parliamentary approval.

Further constitutional reforms were debated. Queensberry in desperation urged the Queen and her English ministers to let him ratify the Act of Security, as only then was there any hope of parliament agreeing to the imposition

of urgently-needed taxes. Permission was refused, and the session ended with him ratifying the wine and liquor acts, but not the Act of Security.

New ministers were brought in and when the Scottish parliament reassembled in 1704 a compromise was proposed.

The ministers would push parliament to accept the Hanoverian succession, but in return the Act of Security would be ratified – though obviously, with the clauses relating to the succession left out. Even with all the arts of political management, this proved a package impossible to sell. Once the succession was settled, the Act of Security would have no bite. England would have got what she wanted and would be likely to relapse into her customary



■ Anne became Queen of Scotland, England and Ireland on the death of her brother-in-law, William II and III

At last, England had been made to sit up and take notice, but the notion that Scotland was in the driving seat would prove to be a disastrous miscalculation

indifference to Scottish grievances

The Duke of Hamilton urged that the Scottish succession question therefore be left open until a satisfactory treaty had been negotiated with England. Still no taxes had been voted, and soon Scottish forces would have to be disbanded. The war in Europe was reaching a critical point, with the Duke of Marlborough undertaking a risky march with much of Britain's army into the heart of Europe. The complication of trouble in Scotland had to be avoided, so at last Anne gave permission to her new Scottish representative, the Earl of Tweeddale, to ratify the Act of Security. She probably regretted this a few days later, when news of the great British victory at the Battle of Blenheim arrived, strengthening her government sufficiently for her to have continued to resist the demands of her tiresome (though mercifully distant) subjects in the north.

Many Scots were delighted. At last they had made England sit up and take notice of them. At last they could hope to negotiate a new relationship with England from a position of strength, and reach a settlement freeing the country's government from English influence.

They were in the driving seat. But this was soon to prove a disastrous miscalculation. Certainly, England was now taking notice. Scottish refusal to agree on the royal succession was a damaging blow. But instead of caving in, England was to land a crippling counter-punch. It was called the Alien Act. ●

THE LOUDEST VOICE AGAINST THE UNION

Because Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun vehemently opposed the Treaty of Union in the first Scottish parliament's last session, he became known as The Patriot. But it wasn't as simple as that



Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, known as 'the Patriot', has long been famous for his vehement, unswerving opposition to the Treaty of Union during the last session of the Scottish parliament, in 1706-7.

From 1703, when he was elected to the parliament, he had been vocal in opposition to the unconditional acceptance of the Hanoverians as successors to Queen Anne. Instead, he urged that strict 'limitations' be placed on the power of any king or queen who was to be shared with England.

When this proposal was rejected in favour of a union involving the loss of the Scottish parliament, Fletcher was left outraged and frustrated. Several times he spoke against the Treaty while it was debated in parliament, and on more than one occasion his anger boiled over into intemperate outbursts, for which he had to apologise.

But Fletcher's opposition to the Union was not as simple as it seems. He was a more complex man than his reputation might suggest.

He was not against all union with England; what he sought was a form of 'confederal' union, under which Scotland would keep its own parliament but would have the same king or queen as England, with combined military forces.

Fletcher was not anxious to fight England over the Union. He knew that any resort to arms would merely let the Jacobites raise the standard of the exiled Old Pretender, and Fletcher was no Jacobite. He also knew that if the English decided to impose the Hanoverian succession by force they would win, and union as a result of conquest would be the worst of all possible outcomes.

What Fletcher really wanted was to end the Scots' dependence on the English royal court and on English government ministers. And those who were most to blame for Scotland's then state of dependence were not the English but the Scottish nobility whose poverty led them to sell themselves to the highest political bidder – to the English

minister who best rewarded them and their followers.

Fletcher's opposition to this system had begun almost 30 years before, as soon as he returned from his early travels on the Continent. He was in trouble with the Privy Council in 1680 and again in 1682, after which he left Scotland. He may have been associated with the plotters against Charles II's life in 1683, and although he had advised against it, he was an active participant in the Duke of Monmouth's rebellion against James VII and II in 1685.

But though Fletcher landed with Monmouth in Devon, he got into a quarrel with a fellow-rebel (who may also have been the expedition's banker) and shot the man on the spot. Fletcher had to be hurried away, taking ship for Spain, and thus missed the rebellion's disastrous end. Not surprisingly, however, he was declared a traitor and his East Lothian estate was forfeited. Making his way back to The Netherlands, he remained in exile until 1689, when he returned to Scotland after the successful invasion of England by William of Orange.

Since Fletcher was not elected to the new Scottish parliament in 1689, he was unable to play a very active part in the Revolution, or in the affairs of the 1690s. But he was not idle. During these years he kept in contact with like-minded, radical, republican thinkers in London, and developed his own analysis of the predicament of Scotland.

Fletcher's political thinking owed much to Machiavelli, the Renaissance Florentine whose writings transformed the understanding of the practice of politics; and Fletcher also drew on a wide knowledge of the forces which were changing Europe at the end of the 17th century.

The results of Fletcher's speculations were a series of pamphlets, published between 1698 and 1704, and later collected as his *Political Works* (1732, modern edition 1997).

One of these pamphlets, 'Two Discourses on the Affairs of Scotland', contained a striking

■ Andrew Fletcher was more concerned about the rise of London's power.

diagnosis of the country's economic and social backwardness, Scotland he thought, 'has been the only part of Europe which did not apply itself to commerce'.

To make good this failure, Fletcher urged that parliament support the Darien venture, to which he himself had pledged £1,000.

Even more serious were the failings of Scottish agriculture, which Fletcher blamed squarely on the greed of great landowners. There ought to be radical measures of land reform, he argued, forcing owners to invest in land farmed by tenants.

The most notorious of Fletcher's proposals was for the relief of poverty. The recent harvest failures, he thought, had created an alarming problem of vagabondage. Again he blamed the nobility for a failure of social responsibility. But his remedy would have required reducing the poor to a condition of domestic servitude, as the price of guaranteed employment.

As for the wretched Highlanders, he reckoned they ought to be simply transplanted into the Lowlands and put to work.

In another pamphlet, 'Discourse of Government with relation to Militias', Fletcher studied the rise of 'standing' or professional armies in Europe since 1500. No other political development, in his view, had done so much to increase the power of kings.

Standing armies required taxes to pay for them, and in turn enabled princes to rule without consent. So far, both England and Scotland had escaped this fate, but given the need to fight the French king Louis XIV's ambition to become a 'universal monarch' in Europe, a standing army

He was taken up by the modern Scottish National Party and presented as their forerunner, but Fletcher was not really a nationalist in that sense

would soon exist here too. To avoid this, Fletcher proposed the creation of a militia in which all men of a certain age would be obliged to serve, with a separate Scottish contingent alongside those from England.

But an even greater threat to Scottish prosperity and autonomy was the rise of London as a capital city. As Fletcher explained in his most remarkable pamphlet, 'Account of a Conversation concerning a Right Regulation of Governments for the common Good of Mankind', the problem was the way in which London was absorbing the economic and cultural resources of every other part of the British Isles.

The only solution Fletcher could imagine was the break-up of Britain into 12 regions (and Scotland itself into two), each organised around a provincial city. In this way, the advantages of London would be spread across the country on a manageable scale. But as Fletcher freely acknowledged, this solution would only work if the whole of Europe was similarly divided up, making it impossible for any one country to dominate others.

In some ways, Fletcher was even more concerned about the rise of London than he was about the

loss of Scotland's independence in the Union. The irony was that he loved London, which he once described as 'the pride and glory, not only of our island, but of the world'.

He frequently visited it, on his way to and from the Continent, where he travelled between Paris and the cities of The Netherlands.

In fact, Fletcher was out of Scotland for longer or shorter periods throughout his adult life.

Only for some of these was he in political exile. Most of his travelling was for his own pleasure.

Although he was a large landowner in East Lothian, he seems to have been at his happiest when frequenting the fashionable new coffee and chocolate houses of London and Paris, and spending his income on clothes and books.

By the end of his life, Fletcher had acquired the largest private library in Scotland. In line with his interests, his collection was particularly strong in the classics, in history and in politics. Fletcher, it is clear, was a man of great learning, and was

respected for this as much as for his politics by his contemporaries.

At the same time, he was not a man of religion, being sharply critical of what he called 'the peevish, imprudent, and detestable conduct of the presbyterians' during the Civil War. Anti-clericalism was common among the Scottish ruling class at the time, but some evidence suggests that Fletcher may have held more seriously heretical opinions.

Since his death Fletcher's reputation has altered several times.

For most of the 18th century he continued to be regarded as 'the patriot' (which did not mean the same as a modern 'nationalist').

In the 1790s he was adopted by radicals who depicted him, somewhat improbably, as a champion of political reform.

In the 1880s he was discovered again by the Scottish supporters of Home Rule and presented as a champion of federalism.

It was only in the 1950s that he was taken up by the modern Scottish National Party and presented as their forerunner. But the extent to which his reputation has changed over time should make us wary of any attempt to use his name in circumstances of which he had no inkling.

Andrew Fletcher was not a nationalist in the modern sense.

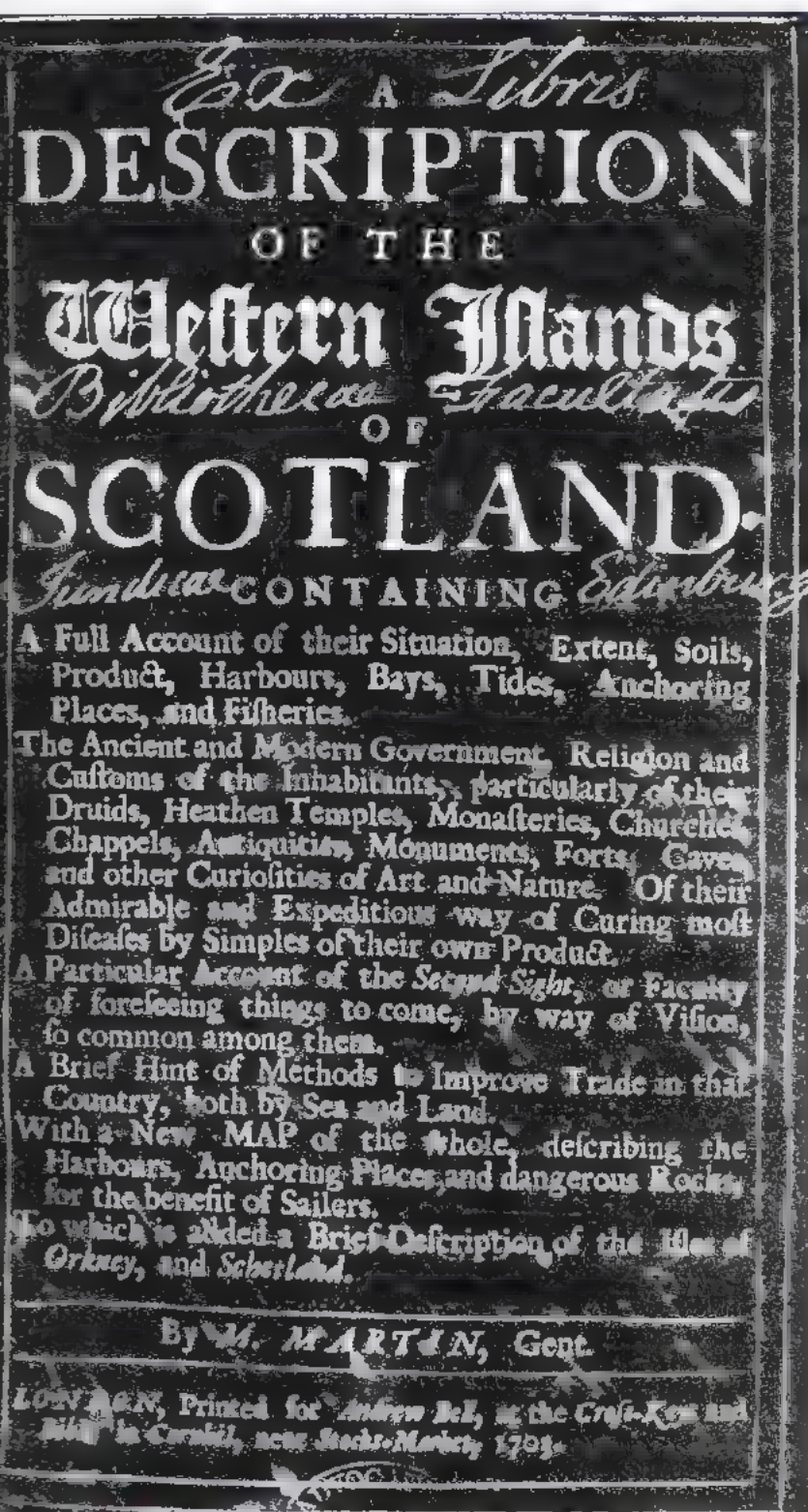
For all his opposition to the Treaty of Union, Fletcher is of most interest as an intelligent and acute observer of the problems facing a small country such as Scotland,

just at the time when the world was turning commercial. ●

■ Saltoun Hall in East Lothian: Fletcher's birthplace and home.



EARLY TALES OF THE WILD WEST



■ Object of extreme curiosity: the cover of Martin's 'Western Islands'.

Martin Martin became a lauded travel writer 300 years ago with his accounts of the Western Isles

'It is a piece of Weakness and Folly to value Things merely on account of their Distance. A Description of some remote Corner in The Indies shall be sure to afford us High Amusement, whilst a Thousand Things much nearer to us might engage our thoughts to better Purpose.'

To the resident of Edinburgh or London in the late 1600s the Hebrides would have been nothing more than a name, on a par with Papua New Guinea today. It was Martin Martin who first drew the Hebrides to the attention of the Lowland public, first by his 'A Late Voyage to St Kilda' in 1698 and then by his 'Description of the Western Isles' in 1703.

It might be, as he claimed, a weakness to value things merely on account of their distance, but it was the relative distance of the Hebrides and the difficulty in getting there that led the books to become best sellers in their day.

The books placed the Hebrides on the travel route for the adventurous, and though Dr Samuel Johnson later claimed that 'no man now writes so ill as Martin's account of the Hebrides is written', it was still an account of a way of life completely foreign to most of its readers – an early National Geographic magazine story without the pictures.

Martin was from the Isle of Skye and so could claim to write with an insider's understanding of his subject, yet there is some doubt whether the picture he painted, in the first book at least, was very true to the facts.

Martin went to St Kilda with the Steward, or Factor, Alexander MacLeod of Pabbay, and the Minister of Harris, John Campbell. For some

years before, the St Kildans had been deluded into following 'Roderick the Impostor', who had set himself up as a self-taught religious leader.

Now the authority of the landowner, MacLeod of Dunvegan, and of the Church was being invoked against him, and Martin was a part of the party being sent to apprehend Roderick.

Martin paints a rather rosy picture of life on St Kilda – in his famous phrase: "There is this only wanting to make them the happiest people in this habitable Globe – that they themselves do not know how happy they are".

He stresses the volume of sea birds and their eggs available to the St Kildans for food, and reckons that the visiting party in three weeks consumed no fewer than 16,000 eggs! If this was even approximately correct, it must have been an exceptionally heavy drain on the island economy, and one that could not be made up until the nesting season in the following year.

On the other hand, Alexander Buchan, the schoolteacher on St Kilda, writing in 1727, pointed out that the St Kildans "look upon the Steward's visit as no great advantage to them, and they very much grudge what he carried away with him".

He with his retinue that come along with him are a heavy burden upon the poor people, forcing their maintenance from them above their ability." It is a rather different picture from Martin's, and, being written from within the community, more likely to be accurate.

It looks rather as though Martin, like so many later writers, was looking at St Kilda through rose-tinted spectacles, unable or unwilling to see the economic fragility of the community. Was he,



The Island of Taransay
by Martin and where the

of the tacksman class, accepting what he reckoned were the dues of the lower classes, without reckoning what it was costing them?

There is more than a hint of the myth of the 'noble savage', and no real mention of the appalling living conditions on the Island.

When we come to the 'Description of the Western Isles' in 1703, Martin seems on surer ground. The 'Late Voyage' had been well received by his public, and he was now an accepted author. In his travels in the Hebrides, he was moving among his own class of tacksmen, or major farmers, more at ease in his surroundings, and probably feeling less necessity to justify himself.

He travelled the length of western Scotland, from Lewis to Arran, and where he could not himself visit an island, as in the case of North Rona,

north of Lewis, he obtained a first hand account of it from the local minister, who had recently been there. He also added chapters on Orkney and Shetland to his account.

In the 'Western Isles' also, Martin seems to have felt himself more at liberty to retail stories told to him, so that this book, as well as a travelogue, is a collection of old stories which would otherwise have been lost. Of the Island of Taransay, off the west coast of Harris, he tells how there were "Two Chappels, one dedicated to St Tarran, the other to St Keith. There is an ancient Tradition among the Natives here that a Man must not be bur'd in St Tarran's, nor a Woman in St Keith's, because otherwise the Corps would be found above ground the day after it is interred"

Roderick Campbell the tacksman

made the experiment without success, but perhaps the people of the 'Castaway 2000' television programme, which was filmed on the island, would like to try it again!

Martin's 'Western Isles' is written in a much more relaxed style than his 'St. Kilda', and is told from within the context of a hierarchical society. The clan chief was still the father of his family, his authority supported by his tacksmen, all related to him at some remove, and below these were the common people supporting the tacksmen and chief by their labour and rents, but in turn being protected and assisted in times of trouble.

Martin's description of the old social system of the islands came just in time; even Dr Johnson, whose famous visit to the Islands in 1773 is said to have been suggested

by a reading of Martin's book, saw that the old hierarchical system had crumbled, as financial considerations had begun to take the place of kinship bonds. In less than half a century, the aftermath of Culloden had swept away what remained of the system pictured by Martin.

Martin had the prejudices of his time and class, of course, and it is hardly surprising that some of his comments grate on modern sensibilities.

He wrote: "Women were anciently denied the use of Writing in the Islands to prevent Love intrigues, their Parents believ'd that Nature was too skillful in that matter, and needed not the help of Education."

Today's readers would hardly agree with that proposition – though one suspects that the famous Dr Johnson might have ●

Proud Scot Sean is the perfect Bond

Connery went from a milk cart to stardom and a knighthood

The name's Connery – Sean Connery. The Scots actor who 'became' secret agent 007 with the release of the first Bond film in 1963, will be forever associated with the character. Other actors have played Bond subsequently, but none so strikingly.

Yet with seven Bond films through his career and in clear danger of being typecast, Connery fought back professionally to succeed in a wide range of other roles and to become known for activities outside of acting, notably his support for Scottish independence.

During his years of tax exile two things never faded: his tattoo with the legend 'Scotland For Ever' and the trace of a Scots accent he brings to whatever part he plays.

The man born Thomas Connery in a tenement flat in Edinburgh's Fountainbridge district in 1930 was honoured in 1991 with the Freedom of his native city. Nine years later, he was due to be knighted on July 5, 2000, by the Queen at Holyrood Palace.

World stardom, celebrity and multi-millionaire status hardly seemed on the cards in his early days. His father was a lorry driver and life was hard for the family in their cold-water flat. Connery has said that during babyhood he had to sleep in a wardrobe drawer.

Wartime difficulties didn't help young Tam's education. Although a bright pupil, he left school at 13 with only the basic attainments and started work with a milk roundsman graduating to a horse and cart of his own and a round in the posh suburbs of Cramond and Davidson's Mains.

When the legend of Connery is recounted, this is where it always starts – with 'Big Tam' the milkman.

He joined the Royal Navy at 17, was invalided out with ulcers two years later, then tried a succession of other unpromising jobs, working as a

labourer, a coffin-polisher, a lifeguard and printer's devil in a newspaper office. He had a passion for football, playing as a forward for junior team Bonnyrigg Rose, and worked hard at building up his excellent physique.

This led to him entering the Mr Universe contest in London and getting nowhere, but enjoying the piece of luck that would change his life. Although neither a dancer nor a singer, he was offered a part in the stage musical 'South Pacific'. The producer simply wanted a tall and well-built young man who could do handsprings.

That was when he changed his name to Sean and began to develop a feeling for the theatre, reading for the first time the work of the great playwrights.

As a diversion, he organised a football team from the cast when the show went on tour and, unbelievably, was offered a trial for Manchester United by Matt Busby.

But Connery had found his niche and soon began to get minor TV and film parts. The breakthrough, of course, came when he was chosen for the part of Bond in 'Dr No'. He was not the most fancied contender. In fact, author Ian Fleming had wanted Cary Grant in the part, but that would have burst the budget, and Connery's lithe, cat-like walk and tough charisma added to his clear acting talents won him the role.

So Connery became Bond for a comparatively meagre £6,000, upped to £9,000 for the next film, 'From Russia with Love', in what would

become a box office smash series.

For his seventh and final Bond film in 1983, 'Never Say Never Again', Connery received around £3milion and a percentage of the profits.

But he had handed over all of his fee for 'Diamonds are Forever' to help establish the Scottish International Education Trust, which supports the aspirations of young Scots.

By this time he had married his second wife, French artist Micheline, and was living stylishly at Marbella in Spain, with other properties

elsewhere. Among his numerous other contrasting film roles, he won a Bafta Best Actor for 'The Name of the Rose' (1986) and an Oscar for 'The Untouchables' (1987).

One abiding legacy from his 007 days was a developing love of golf. In 'Goldfinger' (1965), Bond had to play off a handicap of nine, which meant golf lessons and serious practice for Connery. The inevitable bug bit.

A decade later, the actor really did have a nine handicap and life was genuinely imitating art. ●



■ Connery started life in a wardrobe drawer and now makes movies for millions.

A voice for everyone

Tenor Kenneth McKellar's classical virtuosity struck a popular note

Although he made his name as one of Scotland's finest singers of traditional songs, Kenneth McKellar's sights were set in another direction during his early years. He studied forestry at Aberdeen University

But not for long. His marvellous tenor voice was heard in oratorio recitals, and soon a scholarship was taking him to the Royal College of Music in London, where he won the singing prize in 1952

He sang beside the Australian soprano Joan Sutherland on her first stage appearance in Britain, and he has performed in Benjamin Britten's version of 'The Beggar's Opera'

Although he didn't really fancy the move, he was auditioned for the chorus of the Carl Rosa Opera Company and was immediately offered a principal's part,

touring for £15 a week with 'The Barber of Seville'

But his reputation grew with the demands of television and radio, taking him into a more popular repertoire

He was in great demand for a wide range of appearances and by 1973 he had his own radio show, 'A Song for Everyone'

A busy recording schedule, international touring and recital dates began to fill his diary and opera inevitably faded from the scene. But not the stage for the 1962 home grown panto 'A Wish for Jamie' at the Glasgow Alhambra, with McKellar in the lead role, began a successful formula which ran for several seasons.

Born in Paisley in 1927, Kenneth McKellar had an uncle called Archie Anderson who was one of the first Scots singers to make records in about 1912.



■ Finely tuned: McKellar's soaring talent earned him his own show.



■ Jackson as Hudson the dignified butler in *Upstairs, Downstairs*.

AN ACTOR OF CHARACTER

Gordon Jackson, the so-modest 'star'

The actor who made his international reputation as Hudson the butler in the television series 'Upstairs Downstairs' once turned down a very well paid job.

An American woman approached his table in a London restaurant and offered him a considerable salary to become her real-life butler. Such irony...

At the time, Jackson was trying to rid himself of the image which had stood him in such good stead for five series and which was seen by an estimated 500 million viewers around the world.

Towards the end of his long career, Gordon Jackson - who died aged 66 in 1990 - often worked unseen.

For several years he was the king of the voice-overs, his melodious Scottish tones much in demand for TV commercials. But

after appearing in 150 movies, an amazing total, his features had become very well-known indeed.

Born in a Glasgow tenement in 1923, he had child parts in radio plays before leaving school to become an engineering draughtsman.

But a film role in 1941 pointed him towards his true career and over the years he built up his reputation as a character actor of great ability yet of modest demeanour.

On stage and screen he could handle roles as varied as Banquo in 'Macbeth' and the tough secret service boss in TV's 'The Professionals'.

His award-winning Horatio in a 1969 US production of 'Hamlet' was testament to Jackson's great and unforgettable talent.

A deep mine full of

To the superstitious Scot of past generations, few things could be worse than to die before you were baptised. Without a name, you couldn't enter the 'other world' and your restless spirit was sentenced to wander for ever as a 'ghaistie' close to where your body was laid to rest.

From Aberdeenshire to the Borders, stories abound of the 'nameless ones' with their ceaseless wanderings and piteous cries, terrifying honest folk in the woods or remote places. Such spirits were known as 'tarans'.

A tragic tale about one such being from the village of Whittinghame, East Lothian, ends up with that delightful touch of farce which rural working people relish so much.

A woman from the village had murdered and buried her new-born child beneath a tree. For years, the villagers were terrorised by the child's ghost crying bitterly and running between the tree and the churchyard, where it obviously wanted to be interred properly.

Nobody dared speak to the spirit in case this caused their immediate death. But eventually one local

merry maker, "fearless in his cups", met the ghost in the early hours and hailed it with: "How's a' wi' ye this morning, short-hoggers?"

This referred to the ghost's short socks with no feet, worn away (it was solemnly reported afterwards) by years of restless wandering.

The suddenly happy ghost cried out: "I've got a name at last - Short-Hoggers o' Whittinghame!" and promptly

When it came to good fortune or bad, the Scots of yesterday could come up with some bizarre ideas and convictions.

vanished, having finally found peace.

Hovering somewhere between folk belief and old ale-house jests are the stories of how some Scottish towns got their names.

Alloa, for example, was a nameless place for many years until a council of notable men gathered to choose a label for it, discussing and arguing into the small hours. One of them finally got to his feet impatiently and observed "Weel ah'll awa'."

The group unanimously agreed that this would do nicely.

The story of how Tillicoultry got its name is even more far-fetched. The locals had tried for ages to think of a decent appellation, but without success. One of them was sitting by a pond when a Highland cattle drover passed with his herd. The drover asked "Will ye no' gie your beast a drink?"

The drover said he wouldn't,

but said "There's de'il a coo dry."

Wonderful, thought the man, and rushed off to spread the news of an elegant name with four syllables.

Only boring people point out that Alloa is from the Gaelic for 'rocky place' and Tillicoultry is from 'milklock in the back land'.

More ludicrous is the theory that Lumphannan, Aberdeenshire, and even Lumphinnans, Fife, were named by a king who spent the night in a house locally and was sitting at the fireside when a loose stone came down the chimney. "Losh me," he said. "The lum's fa' in an'."

It's much more colourful than the possibility that these towns were named after the church ('lann') of St Fman.

Although the miners of Fife

regarded the fisherfolk of the coasts as being the most fearful of communities, the miners themselves were renowned for their 'fruits', or superstitious beliefs.

Until the late 18th century they were serfs, bound to their local coal owner for life as their forebears had been, and sold along with the pit if it changed hands.

Thus they were brought up, married and died in the villages where they had been born, inheriting these superstitions along with a distrust of non Fifers, especially 'Loudoners' from the Lothians or 'wast country folk' from the pits of Lanarkshire or Ayrshire.

A folklore account published in 1914 told of an old, hard-drinking Auchterderran miner lamenting the numbers of incomers: "This is no' the place it yist tae be. Ye canna lie fou' at the roadside noo wi'oot gettin' yer pooches rippit."

The list of a miner's bad luck omens from Fife of the olden time would probably take an entire issue of this magazine to explain, but here is a small selection of freits.

Don't start a week's work or set out on a journey on a Friday.

Don't turn back for any reason once you've left the house.

Don't shake hands twice when you say "Goodbye".

Don't walk under a ladder or spill salt (these have passed into general belief).

It is unlucky to dream of eggs, rats, washing, the loss of teeth or fingers.

It is unlucky to speak in praise of horses, cattle, other livestock or children, for this is regarded as 'fore-speaking' and invites catastrophe on the subject mentioned.

One writer claims this is why, even today, a Scots invalid asked how he or she feels will respond "Not any worse." To say "Great!" would be fore-speaking, and invite a relapse at the very least.

It is unlucky to have a peacock's

feather in the house, but definitely lucky to have a horseshoe hanging near the fireplace.

A woman from a mining village whose child had died told a researcher "This is what comes from laughing at freits."

She had never kept a horseshoe at her fireside, a common Fife mining custom, but obtained one



■ A mining-village woman who lost her child promptly tried to alter her luck with a horseshoe.

superstitious beliefs

■ The miners of Fife were known for their respect for 'freits' – or superstitious beliefs – which added up to a long list of Don'ts. Example: you shouldn't shake hands twice when you say 'Goodbye'.



immediately after the tragedy.

Amazingly, many completely irrational beliefs which can be traced back to Medieval times survived into the 20th century, were reported in the modern news media, and are probably still potent today.

In 1935, an otherwise-sensible Aberdeen daily newspaper reported that the corncrake had been heard in

the Cabrach area after many years' absence, and that this was "said to" promise a bumper harvest and a good salmon season.

A few years later, honeymooners were among people injured in a fatal hotel fire in Edinburgh. A local newspaper faithfully reported that when this couple left the house after the marriage ceremony, they

returned to it because they had left something behind. The guests warned them that this was unlucky but they persisted.

Another ill-omen was that the couple had been showered with lentils because rice was in short supply.

In 1938, when an Aberdeen trawler was lost with all hands, one

of the widows told reporters she had a premonition of this disaster after a dream that she had been followed around by a black and white dog.

In this 21st century of information technology and button-pressing logic, you could expect such superstitions to disappear.

But could they really? The roots go deep. ●

The place we could have won and run



That Darien could have worked for the Scots is proved by today's Panama Canal, says biker historian David Ross

■ One of the few surviving reminders of the ill-fated project: a chest which held funds and papers. Now on view at the National Museum of Scotland

I remember being taught at school the details of the 'Darien Scheme' or, as it is sometimes known, the 'Darien Disaster'. The ins and outs upset me then, and the more I have discovered over the years, the more upset I have become.

It was a brilliant idea, and it is no wonder so much of the nation's money was sunk into such a project. After all, the Scots' idea eventually came to fruition in the shape of the Panama Canal. Honest, we could have been contenders!

We have produced so many brilliant engineers since, that building a canal across the Isthmus of Panama must have been feasible even for early settlers. One wee fact that has always intrigued me, strange though it seems, is that the Pacific end of the canal is actually further east than the Atlantic end. This is due to the twists and turns of the isthmus itself.

What is not commonly known is that many Scots had settled in the Gulf of Mexico before Darien. There was a large colony on Barbados, for instance. In fact, Paterson, the mind behind the

scheme, had spent some time in the Bahamas. He was well travelled for a Dumfriesshire boy.

It is always possible in museums to recognise coinage issued by the 'Company trading to Africa and the Indies', as the company set up to colonise Darien was known, because they have a wee setting sun (perhaps it's a rising sun!) at the base of the coin. I've noticed several on my travels.

The ships that set out for Darien left from the port of Leith. We can imagine the populace gathered on the quayside to watch them depart on their great adventure. Three of the ships were fitted out as men-of-war. They were the *Caledonia*, the *St. Andrew* and the *Unicorn*. These were joined by two tenders laden with provisions.

William of Orange, or William II of Scotland and III of England, as he now was, held no love for Scotland. He saw Darien as a slight against the business of the Dutch East India Company and the trading power of

England and made sure many obstacles were laid in the settlers' way.

When the Spanish mounted an attack on the Scots' settlement, one of the Scots, Captain Campbell, assailed them with 200 Highlanders. Though 1,600 strong, the Spaniards were routed with much slaughter.

When news of the failure of Darien reached Edinburgh, there was uproar. But the mob were excited at the news of the settlers' slaughter – under Campbell – of the Spaniards. The popular cry went up that all the houses should be illuminated in recognition of this deed, so proud were the populace of this display of "the auld Scots spirit".

The mob then marched through the city looking for windows that were unlit, and when one was discovered it was smashed – they managed to cause £5,000 worth of damage! Politicians were threatened, and demands were heard that the Scots crown should be withdrawn from William.

In return, the authorities decided the Edinburgh hangman should be flogged for not punishing the rioters. The executioner of Haddington was hired to inflict the punishment, but refused to flog his brother hangman from the capital. The magistrates of Haddington, scared of losing face, then had their own hangman flogged. This innocent man therefore took all the punishment for an Edinburgh riot that could have led to a civil war and the ousting of William II.

There are still place names in Panama that are a throwback to the Darien Scheme – Punta Escoces, Caledonia Bay and the Caledonian Mountains.

I am reliably assured that there are still remains of the Scots settlement, although it is difficult to locate with the growth of jungle fauna now covering it. I'll just have to take someone else's word for that though, as I haven't managed to get my motor-cycle that far yet! ●



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SCOTLAND'S STORY

NEXT WEEK IN PART 30

THE AULD SANG'S END



On the streets, hostility to the proposed Union of Scotland and England was rampant, but the people had no say. The influence belonged to English power and promises – and Burns's 'parcel of rogues'. Our next issue recalls 'the end o' an auld sang' that radically changed Scotland's story.

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